DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 459 427 CS 014 547

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TITLE Implementing a Multifaceted Intervention Program To Increase First Graders' Literacy Skills.
PUB DATE 2001-05-00
NOTE 74p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cross Age Teaching; Early Intervention; Elementary Education; English (Second Language); Grade 1; Grade 5; *Instructional Effectiveness; *Parent Participation; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Strategies; *Tutoring

ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to increase the literacy skills of first-grade students. Students were to improve their reading strategies necessary for success in reading through support from their families and through the use of cross-age reading tutors. A cadre of parent volunteers who presented four parent and child workshops focusing on early literacy skills was trained. The workshops had a modeling component, a practice portion, and follow-up activities that were to be completed at home. Another aspect of the practicum involved training a group of fifth-grade cross-age tutors to tutor the most at-risk first graders in literacy skills. All of these first graders were second-language learners. The 10 cross-age tutoring sessions were held during the school's designated early release time and focused on reading familiar and unfamiliar texts, word work, making books to take home, and phonemic awareness activities. The results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that first-grade students improved their literacy skills through support from their families and through the use of cross-age tutors. Parents, teachers, and students all reported positive attitudes towards working together as a partnership in education, specifically in the area of increasing the literacy experiences necessary for first graders to be successful in reading. Parent letters, parent evaluation forms for individual workshops, parent regret letters, parent celebration invitation letter, end of program parent evaluation form, and the end of program teacher evaluation form are attached. (Contains 66 references.) (Author/RS)

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Implementing a Multifaceted Intervention Program to Increase First Graders' Literacy Skills

by
Terre A. Hradnansky
Cluster 89

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A Practicum II Report Presented to
the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
2001

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APPROVAL PAGE

This practicum took place as described.

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Deputy Superintendent
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Long Beach, California
Address

May 26, 2001
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Terre A. Hradnansky under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

Date of Final Approval of Report

Roberta Schomburg, Ph.D., Adviser

Acknowledgments

I want to thank the numerous people who made this practicum possible. The first-grade students, their families, the first- and fifth-grade teachers, and the fifth-grade students gave generously of their time and support to see this practicum through to completion. A very special thanks goes to the district trainers who supported the program in numerous ways, and especially to the presentation team members, who spent hours and days making sure the presentations would go smoothly. The Parent Teachers Association provided much needed financial support; the program would have been vastly different without their generosity.

Lastly, I want to thank my husband, Craig, and my children, Cody, Curt, and Casee, for without their loving support, patience, and encouragement I would not have pursued my dreams nor met my goals. With the deepest gratitude and love, I dedicate this practicum to them.

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Abstract

Implementing a Multifaceted Intervention Program to Increase First Graders' Literacy Skills. Hradnansky, Terre A., 2001: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Literacy/Elementary/Reading/Curriculum and Instruction/Parent-School Relationship/Parent Education/Cross-Age Tutoring/Second-Language Learners/Parent Involvement/Tutoring.

This practicum was designed to increase the literacy skills of first-grade students. Students were to improve their reading strategies necessary for success in reading through support from their families and through the use of cross-age reading tutors.

The writer trained a cadre of parent volunteers who presented four parent and child workshops focusing on early literacy skills. The workshops had a modeling component, a practice portion, and follow-up activities that were to be completed at home. Another aspect of the practicum involved the writer training a group of fifth-grade cross-age tutors to tutor the most at-risk first graders in literacy skills. All of these first graders were second-language learners. The 10 cross-age tutoring sessions were held during the school's designated early release time and focused on reading familiar and unfamiliar texts, word work, making books to take home, and phonemic awareness activities.

The results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that first-grade students improved their literacy skills through support from their families and through the use of cross-age tutors. Parents, teachers, and students all reported positive attitudes towards working together as a partnership in education, specifically in the area of increasing the literacy experiences necessary for first graders to be successful in reading.

* * * * * * *

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Chapter I: Introduction

Description of Community

The community in which the practicum occurred was located in the western United States. The community was located in a large urban city whose multicultural makeup was approximately 12% Asian, 13% African American, 25% Hispanic, and 50% Caucasian. The service industry was the community's largest employer, followed by the manufacturing and retail industries. Approximately 27% of the children under 18 years of age lived under the poverty level. The local public school district enrollment was 118,000 students in preschool through Grade 12. Many students were bused from their home school neighborhoods to relieve overcrowding and to achieve voluntary desegregation. The school district had a policy that students may attend their school of choice with priority given to the neighborhood school children. Most children in this neighborhood did attend their home school.

The neighborhood in which the school was located was composed of middle- and low-income families. The school neighborhood was stable and many of the households were composed of families with children and working parents. Tree-lined streets and single-family homes characterized the setting.

Writer's Work Setting

The work setting was a kindergarten through fifth grade public school originally built in 1951. The school had additional buildings and bungalows added to accommodate student growth. The school's mission was to provide each child with a strong foundation in academic skills in the belief that all students could learn and become responsible. The school had a science lab with a certificated science specialist, a Resource Specialist Program (RSP), a Reading Recovery Program, and a school library equipped with a

computer lab for the purpose of research. Each of these programs supported the school's mission statement.

The school had 37 classes, with 20 students per class for the primary grades and 35 students per class for the fourth and fifth grades, in accordance with state guidelines for class size. There were two primary multiage classes; five classes each at the kindergarten, first, second, and third grades; three fourth-grade classes; and four fifth-grade regular education classes. There was also one Spanish bilingual/transitional class in each kindergarten through fourth-grade class level and three self-contained special day classes serving preschool through the fifth grade.

The educational environment at the school perpetuated academic growth, and the principal's list and honor roll recognized students. Good attendance was encouraged and awards were given monthly for recognition. Stop, Think, and Act Responsibly awards were given to students daily to recognize good behavior, and Citizen of the Month awards were given monthly.

The student population of the school was diverse. School enrollment was approximately 775 students, the makeup of which was 40% Hispanic, 35% Caucasian, 15% African American, and 10% other ethnic groups. Approximately half of the students were bused from distant school neighborhoods to relieve overcrowding. The remainder of the students were either neighborhood children or children transported by their parents to the school of their choice.

The school staff included a principal, a facilitator, a counselor, 40 certificated teachers, and 13 noncertificated staff members. There was also a half-time nurse, a psychologist 1 day a week, a librarian 3 days a week, a full-time RSP teacher, and a full-time speech specialist on staff. A media assistant serviced the library 1 day a week, most

regular classes had a college aide for 4 hours a week, and the special education classes had at least one full-time aide.

Writer's Role

The writer had several roles and responsibilities in the school. The writer taught 20 kindergarten to second-grade students in a self-contained classroom. The writer developed, implemented, and modified curriculum and instruction to meet the diverse needs of all the students. Conferencing with parents regarding student progress was part of the writer's responsibility. The writer also served as a team member on various school and district-level committees.

Chapter II: Study of the Problem

Problem Statement

The problem to be solved in this practicum was that many first-grade students were not successful at grade-level reading skills.

Problem Description

The problem that existed in this writer's work setting was that many first-grade students were not successful at grade-level reading skills and were not reading at grade level. Students were placed in classes based upon English language-acquisition levels; all students were taught in English in accordance with recent state legislation. There were two classrooms of students who were at the beginning stages of acquiring the English language. The other classes had either English-only students or English-only students mixed with students who had acquired higher levels of English. Within each classroom there were mixed reading-achievement levels. The school had adopted and implemented a new phonics-based reading series at the midsemester point. The series was taught to the students in a class as a whole regardless of the reading ability of individual students. In addition, all first-grade teachers had been trained in the New Zealand model of whole language using the techniques of guided reading groups and running records. Students were instructed at their individual reading levels in small groups using the guided reading model. There were two reading specialists on staff who were trained in the Reading Recovery Program. The reading specialists instructed first-grade students who had been identified by their teachers as the most at risk of failure in reading, yet the teachers stated the number of students referred exceeded the number of students that could be serviced. In addition, students who were at the beginning stages of acquiring the English language did not qualify for the Reading Recovery Program

because a certain level of English acquisition was one of the qualifying factors for entry into the program. All parents were asked to read to and with their children at home and to document the reading on monthly Home Reading Club logs. Many students did not return their monthly reading logs or returned them with only a few entries.

First-grade students were directly affected because they were the ones who were not achieving at the expected levels in reading. The problem affected them in multiple dimensions. Their self-esteem, future achievement in school, and future achievement in later life were affected. Other students in the class were affected because teachers tended to spend more instructional time assisting students who were having difficulty learning; therefore, less time was spent on other teaching and learning. Parents were asked to assist their children with reading at home, so the parents were also affected. The teachers and the school system were affected because the state monitored student achievement and imposed penalties or rewards based on student achievement.

One solution to the problem that had been tried was to teach children in their home language until a certain English language-acquisition level was attained in the hopes that students would better transfer literacy skills learned in their primary language to English literacy. This solution was no longer an option because the state passed legislation that required that all students in public schools be taught in English regardless of their English-acquisition levels. Another solution was to provide an extended school year or summer school for students who had not attained grade-level reading skills. This solution was successful for the students who attended, but several families had opted not to participate in this option for a variety of personal reasons. Perhaps a significant reason the reading problem had not been solved was because most solutions tried had targeted students and provided the students with additional support at school. The solutions had

not addressed support for the students at home, which is where the students spent a majority of their time.

Problem Documentation

The evidence of the problem in the work setting was found through a variety of sources. School records were one source of documentation. School records indicated that 43 of 98 first-grade students were reading below grade level using district benchmarks as an index. Teachers administered a district-benchmark book test when a student's performance in classroom reading indicated a readiness to take and pass the test.

Home Reading Club records were another source of documentation. Home Reading Club calendars were turned in monthly and tallied to see if students were meeting the goal. Students who met the monthly goal received a small prize, such as a pencil or bookmark. Students who met the semester goal of reading a minimum of 20 days for 3 of 5 months also received a book as an incentive. The records indicated that only 30 of 112 first-grade students met the Home Reading Club goal of reading at least 20 days per month for 3 of 5 months.

A third source of documentation was counselor records, which indicated that first-grade teachers identified 50 of 112 first-grade students for at-risk conferences because the students were at risk of academic failure in reading. Counselor records revealed that teachers identified the students who were at risk of academic failure in reading primarily because (a) the students were experiencing considerable reading difficulty, (b) students were below level in district reading benchmarks, (c) proficiency in the English language was not adequate to support reading in English for some of the students, and (d) students did not have adequate literacy support in the home or at school.

The district benchmark documentation, Home Reading Club records, and counselor records on first-grade students identified as at risk of academic failure in reading were all evidence that supported the problem.

Causative Analysis

There appeared to be several causes related to the problem in the work setting. Some causes might have had an interactive effect on each other. Beginning readers may not have had the readiness skills necessary to build on to become successful readers. Some beginning readers were not able to (a) play with language, such as rhyming; (b) identify the letters in the alphabet and their corresponding sounds; (c) answer comprehension or inferential questions about familiar stories; and (d) successfully retell stories. Home Reading Club records indicated that many students were not reading at home, which could have meant that the students were not receiving adequate support or reinforcement at home in the area of reading, that parents might not have had the strategies to assist their child at home with literacy skills related to reading, or both.

Another cause related to the problem was that second-language learners and other at-risk students might not have acquired a firm foundation in the English language for successful literacy skills in English. Legislators at the state level passed an initiative that required all students to be taught and tested in the English language regardless of the students' English language proficiency level. Teachers reported to the counselor that some students were at risk of academic failure in reading because their proficiency in the English language was not adequate to support reading in the English language. Students who did not speak Standard English as a first language were having considerable difficulty in reading success. Teachers also reported that students who were having

reading difficulties were not receiving adequate support at the school level for them to be successful.

Teachers and students were required to follow national, state, and district standards and guidelines in the teaching and learning of reading. A fourth possible cause of the problem was that reading standards might have been raised to a level that was so rigorous that the standards were not developmentally appropriate and were difficult for many students to achieve.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A broad literature review was conducted in the areas of parent involvement, parent-school relationship, developmental issues related to reading attitudes towards reading and literacy, second-language learners and literacy, and elementary reading curriculum and instruction. Electronic searches were performed on the ERIC and PsychInfo databases. This list was supplemented by searching the reference sections of retrieved documents and books for additional research pieces. The review of literature was limited by focusing on current research from 1990 to the present, unless it was seminal research.

There was much research and literature that supported the idea that students who were poor readers in the early grades continued to do poorly if no literacy support was provided. Juel (1988) followed a group of 54 students from first through fourth grade and found that those students who were poor readers and lacked phonemic awareness skills in Grade 1 were almost certainly poor readers in Grade 4 if no literacy help had been provided. Juel also found that those same poor readers in fourth grade had not achieved the decoding skill levels that proficient second-grade readers had achieved by the beginning of second grade. Lastly, Juel reported that poor readers read considerably

less than proficient readers, which indicated that the amount of reading contributed to achievement in reading.

Slavin (1994, 1996) reported that students who failed to find success in reading in the early grades saw school as punishing, were likely to become unmotivated, had poor self-concepts as learners, and tended to dislike and were anxious about reading. Slavin et al. (1994) found that waiting until third grade to assist children in reading was too late for successful remediation efforts because students who failed to find success in reading in the early grades almost always failed to be successful in school in their later years. Stanovich (1986) reported that students who started their school years with low-level reading skills continued to acquire later reading skills at a slower rate. Because these students started off with lower-level reading skills and also acquired skills at a slower rate, they fell further behind in reading achievement. Good readers acquired reading skills quickly and progressed at a faster rate, and poor readers got further behind because they acquired reading skills more slowly and thus did not catch up to their peers.

Several researchers (Adams, 1990; Chard & Dickson, 1999; Stanovich, 1986) found that a child's knowledge of phonemic awareness upon entering school was closely related to success in learning to read. Research supported that understanding of the alphabetic principle was necessary for success in early reading. Student knowledge of letter names, letter knowledge, and the ability to name letters quickly and effortlessly were some of the strongest predictors of early reading-achievement success (Adams; Chard, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1998).

Morrow and Pastore (1993) suggested a strong link between a child's home environment and a child's literacy development. The level of adult reading, discussion of ideas, exploring word meanings, and the adult value and enjoyment of reading in the

home was linked to children's success in reading (Adams, 1990; de Onis & Coxwell, 1997; Saratore & Walsh, 1996). Healy (1994) discussed the relationship of reading comprehension being dependent on the brain's neural networks being developed through experiences with the world, and so parents who talked with their children and provided interesting experiences for them were building foundations for future reading success. Jensen (1998) reported that challenging learning and interactive feedback were two important ingredients to maximize brain growth and that certain brain structures were primed for maximum learning in infancy and early childhood. The auditory cortex and the left hemisphere of the brain, which were primarily responsible for language development, were developed and shaped by children's early experiences with language interactions with parents and early caregivers. Children who were exposed to rich, early language experiences developed better language skills that were necessary for later reading skill development.

In the seminal report, Becoming a Nation of Readers, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) stated that parents did not always know what they were supposed to do to help their child learn to read. Epstein (1987) found that parents wanted to help their children succeed in school, but they wanted and needed the school's help in knowing what to do with their children. Edwards (1995) found that if literacy learning in the home was significantly inconsistent with literacy learning at school, it was confusing and problematic to children.

Sometimes teachers, parents, and the schools held assumptions that impeded successful family/school partnerships that could benefit student achievement (Cairney & Munsie, 1995). Teachers and schools asked parents to "Read to your child" but not all parents understood how to do so successfully (Edwards, 1995). Grossman (1999)

cautioned teachers and school personnel to examine possible negative preconceptions about parents that came from professional literature, colleagues, the media, and children. Blame and finger-pointing was to be avoided in order to form positive partnerships in the education of children. Parents reported frustration about not knowing (a) where to begin storybook reading, (b) if they were supposed to ask questions and what the questions were, (c) how to keep their child's attention, and (d) if it was appropriate to use the pictures. Some parents avoided schools and thus further limited their ability to help their children. Parents avoided school for various reasons. Parents might have had negative school experiences, might have been intimidated by the schools (Darling, 1992), or might not have viewed themselves as important in the education of their children. Social stresses such as unemployment and poverty could also have prevented parents from coming to their child's school (Berger, 1995). In spite of obstacles to successful family/school partnerships, Epstein (1991) found that parents and teachers shared common goals for literacy learning for children, but that parents and teachers needed more information on how to work together to successfully reach those goals.

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) stated that there were group risk factors that were strong indicators for identifying children at risk for reading difficulties in English. Ogbu (1995) found that students with cultural differences, language differences, or both faced problems of social adjustment and academic performance in school because of those differences. Research strongly suggested that inadequate proficiency in both a student's first language and in English creates a risk of semilingualism, which in turn contributes to school failure (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). A critical concept in reading acquisition is that learners will not understand what they are reading if the content exceeds their language comprehension levels (de Onis & Coxwell, 1997; Healy, 1994).

Kreuger and Townshend (1997) reported that second-language learners had great difficulties learning to read in English because the learners not only had difficulty learning to understand oral language in English, but had the additional struggle with trying to understand the written English text as well.

Assessments in general, and for young children specifically, have had a history of problems. Tests for racial minorities, ethnic groups, and low socioeconomic classes (Stanley, 1996) and primary-age students (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) were not good indicators of student ability or achievement (Taylor & Watson, 1998). Traditional achievement tests given in English to non-English or nonstandard English speaking students might lack validity in test results (Stanley). Additionally, test results for students who took tests that lacked interaction (i.e., no support given by the teacher) were interpreted with an assumption that the students who took the tests and the test writers had the same understanding of the test questions, an assumption which has rarely been true (Kragler, 1996). Standardized tests compared student performance against other students' performance rather than measured the growth and progress of individual students against themselves, so that students who appeared to be making no progress on annual standardized tests actually might have mastered many new concepts over the course of the year (Falk, 1998). When leveled texts were used for more authentic reading assessments, the results were only reliable and valid if the students reading the text had sufficient background knowledge and interest in the text (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson, & Preece, 1991).

The literature review indicated that student reading-readiness levels, student support in literacy skills at home, a firm foundation in the English language for students,

and the use of developmentally appropriate reading standards and valid assessments affected student success at grade-level reading skills.

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The goal of the practicum was that students in the first grade would be able to read and comprehend at or above grade level.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

1. Sixty of 100 first-grade students will read at or above their grade level at the end of the practicum as indicated by district reading benchmarks.

2. First-grade children will receive additional literacy support at home, with at least 30 of 100 students demonstrating reading behavior growth, as measured by scores on Fredericks and Rasinski's Attitudinal Scale for Parents (1990), a home reading behavior survey.

3. Twenty of 100 first-grade students identified by their teachers as most at risk of reading failure will receive additional literacy support at school in order to increase their literacy skills, as measured by at least 15 of the students receiving a partially proficient score of 117/168 or higher on the district literacy screen/phonics assessment.

Measurement of Outcomes

The writer measured Outcome 1 by comparing data at the end of the practicum on first grade student scores on district reading benchmarks and by counting the number of students who passed or surpassed their grade-level benchmark. The reading benchmarks involved the student reading a leveled book while the teacher recorded errors and self-corrections of words within the reading passage. Upon completing the book or passage, the student answered comprehension and inferential questions about the reading. Students had to pass both the oral-reading portion and the comprehension portion of the

test to pass the benchmark. There was a fiction and a nonfiction selection for each level, and a student had to pass both genres to be considered proficient at that level.

Outcome 2 was measured by analyzing scores on a reading behavior survey utilizing Fredericks and Rasinski's Attitudinal Scale for Parents (1990). The survey utilized a Likert scale to measure parents' observations of their children's growth in reading behavior. The survey also included three open-ended statements to which parents responded.

Computing and comparing test scores on the district literacy screen/phonics assessment measured the third outcome. The assessment was given to each student individually, where the teacher gave oral instructions and the student responded orally. Items on the assessment included isolating beginning and ending sounds, blending, segmentation, syllabification, rhyming, deep alphabetic knowledge, and identifying words on graded word lists.

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

This practicum addressed the problem that many first-grade students were not successful at grade-level reading skills and were not reading at grade level. A review of the literature was conducted to generate possible solutions to the problem. The topic areas researched for the solution strategy were reading achievement, parental involvement, elementary-reading curriculum and instruction, parent-school relationship, preventing reading failure, tutoring, and attitudes towards reading and literacy. The review was limited by focusing on research from 1990 to the present. Several researchers addressed similar problems with solutions from which the writer was able to glean ideas.

One research strategy that was repeatedly addressed in the literature was identifying and providing students with early support in literacy, preferably in the first grade, for the most at-risk readers. The California Reading Task Force recommended that schools have effective instructional literacy plans in place, which emphasized early intervention for students by mid-first grade (California Department of Education, 1996). Pikulski (1996) defined early intervention as programs designed to intervene and prevent problems in literacy acquisition rather than remediate established reading problems. Slavin (1996) utilized tutoring by certificated teachers primarily for first-grade students who needed additional support to be successful at reading. Snow et al. (1998) recommended that students who were having difficulties in reading should receive extended time and additional support in reading-related instruction starting in the first grade. This added support should be in addition to their regular-classroom reading instructional program. The Reading Recovery Program (Clay, 1993) proved to be successful as an early intervention program for first-grade students. The program

supported the first-grade students who were struggling the most with literacy skills. The support the students received was in addition to the classroom literacy program, the tutoring was one-to-one, and the teachers were highly trained to deliver instruction that was specially designed to meet each child's literacy needs.

The literature (Adams, 1990; California Department of Education, 1995) referred to the explicit teaching of reading skills and strategies to students as another strategy for increasing literacy skills. Chard et al. (1998) recommended the teaching of common, high frequency words, word parts, and letter patterns, even before all letter-sound correspondences were learned. The authors summarized research that documented automaticity in word recognition and common blends as skills that proficient readers possessed and utilized, which in turn supported the readers in reading comprehension. Another strategy referred to was to choose a short list of common decodable words that could be reinforced in the context of stories being read so that the practice of reading the common, high frequency words would be meaningful.

Keene and Zimmermann (1997) recommended giving readers support and guidance during the initial learning of skills to assist the learners towards independence in the tasks. This support, referred to as mediated scaffolding, could be displayed in a variety of actions such as task sequence, task selection, teacher assistance, or peer assistance. Smith, Simmons, and Kameenui (1998) discussed the importance of guided practice as a type of scaffolding, where a teacher would model and use a previously taught strategy in a specific situation, the student would practice the strategy, and the teacher would give feedback. The scaffolding of materials, tasks, and feedback was essential for diverse learners to improve their success rate in acquiring reading skills. Dermody and Speaker (1999) trained young readers to use the specific strategies of

making predictions, questioning, and summarizing in order to help them improve their comprehension skills. Scaffolding procedures, such as reciprocal teaching and modeling, were implemented to teach these strategies to improve reading comprehension with young and middle-grade students.

Fayden (1997) used shared reading with big books, modeling strategies that proficient readers use when reading, to develop the reading skills of Native American and Hispanic kindergarteners. Concepts of print, vocabulary, one-to-one correspondence, conventions of grammar, questioning, predicting, and retelling were taught utilizing shared reading and modeling, and significant improvement in these reading strategies for all students were reported. Cunningham (1990) worked with students who were explicitly taught phonemic awareness skills using the strategy of modeled practice to directly link the skills taught to the activity of reading. These students performed better on tests of actual reading performance than students who were explicitly taught phonemic awareness skills without linking the skills to the activity of reading. Cunningham found that both groups of students increased their literacy skills in phonemic awareness activities; therefore while programs utilizing the skill and drill method were effective in teaching specific skills, the utilization of these skills in actual reading activities might be dependent on instruction that links the application of these skills to real reading situations.

The California Department of Education (1995) and Routman (1996) suggested that the school and community work together to identify, train, and support volunteer leaders who would be involved in literacy programs that ensured all children learn to read. Some programs utilized community volunteers to support literacy programs in the schools. Hopkins (1998) identified several guidelines and activities that volunteers could

use with young children struggling with reading acquisition. Volunteers could read with children, read to children, and use mediated scaffolding to support reading by children. The Charlottesville (VA) City Schools trained community volunteers who tutored first-grade students struggling with literacy acquisition (Invernizzi, Juel, & Rosemary, 1997). Volunteers were trained in specific literacy-acquisition strategies and a reading coordinator supervised the tutoring program and supported the volunteers. The volunteers each tutored one student twice weekly in 45 minute sessions. Pinnell and Fountas (1997) wrote a handbook providing volunteers with guidelines and suggestions for use with children who were having difficulty acquiring literacy skills, so that volunteers and children alike could experience a successful tutoring relationship. Wasik (1999) made a distinction between reading tutors, who were expected to assess skills and helped children develop strategies for reading, and reading coaches, who provided one-to-one literacy experiences for children. The reading coaches needed less training and supervision, and they provided students with literacy development in the areas of storybook reading, comprehension, retelling, reading motivation, writing opportunities, storytelling, and active listening.

Morrow, Tracey, and Maxwell (1995) cited several programs that found success with establishing parent networks and support systems that familiarized parents with current teaching practices in reading and enabled parents to assist their children in the area of reading. These researchers collected information on over 50 family-involvement programs that promoted family literacy, with over 20 of those programs dedicated to parent-involvement programs that supported children's literacy growth. Programs were supported through federal, state, and grassroots local efforts, and were often supported collaboratively through several agencies. Morrow and Pastore (1993) reported that

parents who read to their children from a variety of reading materials and promoted positive attitudes towards reading had a significant, positive impact on their child's literacy learning. Programs that encouraged active parent involvement, bringing the school and family together in support of children's early literacy, helped prevent reading failure of children in later years (Denti & Guerin, 1999).

Epstein (1991) noted that successful parent and school partnerships had to include all families so that all children could be helped at home so all children could achieve at school. To encourage reading support for children in the home, a comprehensive reading program must be in place where schools work with families to help the children learn to read (California Department of Education, 1995). Adams (1990) and Bishop, Yopp, and Yopp (2000) suggested that families be encouraged to read and discuss books with their children, model good reading habits and strategies, take their children to the library often, watch TV programs and provide computer literacy games that promote good reading skills, and encourage their children to write to significant others about what they were reading.

Parents who played a more active role in their child's reading were found to express more satisfaction in their own ability to help their child at home (Kinnucan-Welsch, Magill, Schmich, & Dean, 1998). Handel (1992) cited the success of the Partnership for Family Reading program where parents had the opportunity to attend workshops designed to familiarize parents with interesting children's books and taught parents how to read aloud to their children and discuss the readings. During the workshops parents practiced reading books, used modeled reading strategies with other parents, discussed the literature in a group, and borrowed books to share with their child at home. Participating parents reported feeling closer as a family, reading more and a

better quality of books, and feeling better able to teach their children reading strategies at home as a result of the program.

Some research (California Department of Education, 1996; Krashen, 1993) suggested that students who read daily for a sustained period of time increased their literacy because literacy growth depends on the amount of reading students actually engage in. De Onis and Coxwell (1997) found that students who had the opportunity to talk about literature and how the literature connected to the students' own personal lives and experiences gave reading a sense of purpose, which in turn supported the students' literacy growth. Keene and Zimmermann (1997) taught several metacognitive reading strategies to students based on information of what proficient readers did and thought while reading, and helped the students learn the literal and inferential comprehension skills necessary for proficient reading comprehension. These strategies included asking questions, determining what was important, connecting the texts to self, to the world, and to other text, creating and using images, and synthesizing ideas to aid in the understanding of texts. Healy (1990) suggested that adults in the schools model the correct use of oral and written language and thought processes so that students can develop the appropriate language and communication skills necessary for literacy success in school.

Chard et al. (1998) reported that literacy activities that utilized mediated scaffolding techniques supported and guided students towards success in reading. Clay and Cadzen (1990) described the highly successful Reading Recovery Program that had methods grounded in Vygotskian techniques. The program utilized scaffolding, mediating, and the conscious realization of mental processes to support beginning struggling readers as they negotiated reading and writing activities. Knapp and Winsor

(1998) reported that when second-grade students were asked what reading strategies helped them learn to read, the students responded that the activities that most helped them was when an adult or older child read along with the them, helped them with difficult words, and explained difficult text. Kragler (1996) referred to this approach as apprenticeship learning. The approach utilized an experienced reader to scaffold learning and mediate reading strategies that supported the students' reading growth.

Finally, a number of researchers (Chandler & Gibson, 1998; Crowley, 1998; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994) found that the use of cross-age tutors provided additional support in reading and language development for first-grade students and helped the first-grade students improve their literacy skills. The California Department of Education (1996) recommended that intervention strategies should be provided for children no later than the middle of first grade, possibly enlisting the assistance of cross-age tutors. Chandler and Gibson trained fifth graders to tutor first-grade students as part of a school-wide reading partners program. The fifth graders were taught to assist the first-grade students in book selection, prediction, questioning, and other reading strategies good readers utilize. The fifth graders wrote letters, similar to journals, to the teacher to recounting the reading strategies utilized, the books selected, and the interactions with the first-grade reading partners. Crowley cited an example of a seventh-grade tutor who gave advise on reading strategies to a first-grade tutee that not only helped improve the first grader's literacy skills, but also raised the first grader's self-confidence and esteem. Leland and Fitzpatrick trained sixth-grade students to work with and tutor kindergarten students in the area of literacy. The researchers' findings indicated that both groups of students increased their literacy skills and their positive attitudes about literacy. Parents,

students, and teachers reported an increase in the students' choosing literacy activities in their free time and greater confidence in approaching literacy activities.

The writer generated several solution strategy ideas based on the research and programs carried out in similar situations. One strategy used often was to identify and provide the most at-risk first-grade students with early support in literacy (California Department of Education, 1996; Chard et al., 1998; Pikulski, 1996; Slavin, 1996; Snow et al., 1998). A second strategy often used was to explicitly teach reading skills and strategies, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, high frequency words, comprehension, and re-reading for fluency, to students (Chard et al.; Cunningham, 1990; Dermody & Speaker, 1999; Fayden, 1997).

Other strategies suggested were to identify and train volunteer leaders to help support literacy programs, and to establish parent networks and support systems to familiarize parents with current teaching practices in reading and enable them to assist their children in the area of reading (California Department of Education, 1995; Denti & Guerin, 1999; Epstein, 1991; Handel, 1992; Kinnucan-Welsch et al., 1998; Morrow et al., 1995; Routman, 1996). Encouraging students to read daily for a sustained period of time (Krashen, 1993) and providing students with opportunities to talk about literature and how literature connects to the students' own personal lives and experiences (de Onis & Coxwell, 1997; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997) were suggested solutions also. Several researchers (Chard et al., 1998; Clay & Cazden, 1990; Healy, 1990; Knapp & Winsor, 1998; Kragler, 1996) suggested using mediated scaffolding to support and guide students towards success in reading as solutions. Finally, using cross-age tutors that provided additional support in reading and language development for first-grade students was also

a suggested solution cited in the literature (Chandler & Gibson, 1998; Crowley, 1998; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994).

The writer evaluated the solutions and ideas that were generated from the literature to determine if they were feasible given the problem setting, the population affected, and the available resources. Identifying and providing the most at-risk first-grade students with early support in literacy was a solution that was feasible, was already being partially implemented through existing school programs, and further expansion of the programs to include more students might have been beneficial. Explicitly teaching reading skills and strategies to students was being implemented at the classroom level, and could possibly have been expanded upon to include training in similar techniques for parents, tutors, or both. Identifying and training volunteers to help support literacy programs was already being implemented at the school with intermediate-grade students, but was not in place for primary-grade students. This could have been a feasible solution if additional volunteers were available, and it would have continued to encourage positive attitudes between the school and community.

Establishing parent networks and support systems was feasible as a solution and might have encouraged positive attitudes towards reading and a better understanding of the reading curriculum. Since students improved their reading by engaging in reading, encouraging students to read for a sustained period of time was realistic and important. This solution was already being implemented at the school site in the classroom and encouraged in the home through the Home Reading Club. Providing students the opportunities to connect to literature, and supporting and guiding students towards success in reading through the use of mediated scaffolding techniques was important for reading comprehension, and could have possibly been implemented through the use of

volunteers or tutors. Finally, cross-age tutors had been used in previous years at the school as an informal big buddy/little buddy program, so this could have also been a workable solution.

Description of Selected Solutions

The writer implemented a solution that represented a unique combination of ideas gleaned from the literature. The solution was also based on the analysis and evaluation of the writer's own ideas. The proposed solution was implemented over a period of eight months and was a multifaceted approach that provided additional support in literacy for all first-grade students in general, and specifically focused on the most at-risk first-grade readers. The solutions proposed included a volunteer leadership group who conducted parent/child literacy training sessions, in the parents' home language, for all first-grade families. Literacy intervention sessions for the most at-risk first-grade readers that utilized cross-age reading buddies to provide literacy support and second-language support for English-language learners were also scheduled. Lastly, additional family support in early literacy would be provided by establishing a parent education library on literacy and by adding a section on literacy to the school web site, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) web site, or both.

The solutions were justifiable because student records and counselor records documented almost half of the first-grade students were at risk of academic failure in reading, first-grade students did not have adequate literacy support in the home or at school, and proficiency in the English language was not adequate to support reading in English for some students. In addition, the parent/child literacy sessions, cross-age reading-buddy sessions, and the additional family support in literacy provided first-grade students with the additional support in reading strategies that were necessary for success

in reading in general, and targeted specifically the reading strategies necessary to pass school, district, and state reading assessments.

Report of Action Taken

There were several key people in the implementation of this project. One portion of the implementation involved a core of parent volunteers, district trainers, first graders and their parents, and the writer all working together to increase first-grade literacy skills. Another aspect of the implementation plan focused on 20 bilingual first-grade students identified by their teachers to be at risk of acquiring the necessary literacy skills for them to be successful at school. The students were paired with 10 fifth-grade cross-age buddies trained by the writer to tutor the at-risk first graders in literacy skills. The final focus of the implementation plan was on providing parents with information about children's literacy acquisition via a parent lending library and the school PTA web site.

The writer recruited and guided a parent volunteer leadership team to conduct four parent/child literacy sessions offered to all first-grade families. During the writer's research of successful family reading programs, information became available that extra monies for parent education at the district level was available to train parent and school employees in a program called Partners in Print (PIP). An initial roadblock was that the program needed to be purchased in order for the school to participate in the training sessions. The writer approached the principal for funding, but there was not any money available in the budget to cover the cost. The writer then approached the school PTA for funding, and the PTA generously approved the additional expense for the purchase of the PIP program.

The writer distributed flyers and approached parents at the school to recruit members for the PIP leadership team. A core of five Spanish and nine English parent

volunteers, a Spanish-speaking paraprofessional, and the writer were signed up for the four training sessions. The PIP training sessions covered 10 workshops with 4 mini-stations in each workshop for a total of 40 stations. The training sessions were conducted at the district's board building during the school day. The sessions were conducted in the parents' home language of Spanish or English. The writer was the liaison between the school district and the volunteers, and also coordinated car pools so that all volunteers could attend. At the end of the training sessions, the writer coordinated school-site meetings to discuss how the PIP program would be adapted to meet the needs of the parents and trainers at the school.

The school leadership team met and discussed the topics and logistics of the four sessions. The workshops were offered during the school day and all members of the team agreed the sessions would be presented in the parent's home language of Spanish or English. The school principal arranged for busing for families whose children normally ride the bus to school, and the writer coordinated funding from the school PTA and the district office to provide for the necessary materials for the presentations. The volunteers worked as a team to plan the workshops, including deciding the list of materials needed, setup/cleanup, and publicity.

The school PTA provided the funding for the larger presentation books and for purchasing the PIP program. The purchased program included a trainer's guide, presentation team handouts, and reproducible handouts for parents, including sample invitations, reminders, and evaluations. Incentives, prizes, and funds for the final celebration were also provided through PTA financing. The leadership team used the information in the Partners in Print trainer's guide (Zrna, Robinson, & Falkenberg, 1996) extensively in planning for the workshops.

The school district provided support in duplication of workshop handouts, flyers, and purchased supplies such as tape, markers, paper, and easels for the presentations. A district trainer came to each workshop and provided support and feedback, and two trainers who spoke Spanish also provided additional support. The leadership team borrowed books from the public and school library in the language of the presentation so that parents could fully participate with their children during the workshops.

There was some discussion as what to call the new parent/child literacy program. The leadership team decided to use the name Partners in Print for the school program for two reasons. First, the team thought the Partners in Print program should receive recognition because it was the basis of the program offered even if the program was being adapted to meet the team and school's needs. Second, the team liked the idea of referring to the program by the acronym PIP; they thought the program would draw more participants with a catchy name. The four PIP literacy workshops were scheduled, each having a different focus on early literacy skills. The workshops offered were on the following topics:

1. Drawing meaning from text, including four rotation stations on introducing books, looking at pictures, asking questions, and guessing the ending.

2. The reading/writing connection, including four rotation stations on language experience, environmental print, notes, and lists.

3. Reading favorites, including three rotation stations on rereading favorite books, nonfiction books, and different versions of the same fairy tale.

4. Building self-esteem, including four rotation stations on praising children, using photos to write your own story, celebrating yourself using literature, and making your own book/story tapes.

After the preliminary timetable was set, the writer arranged for the leadership team to meet in the smaller presentation teams, just as they would in the classrooms, and practice for the sessions. One English speaking and two Spanish speaking presenters had decided they could not continue as part of the leadership team, and an additional English speaking presenter decided she could support the group in the classrooms but could not be one of the actual presenters. The writer initially was going to coordinate but not actually present at the workshops so that the sessions would be parent to parent, but the rest of the team thought the writer should present the workshops as a teacher and a parent (one of the writer's children attended the school, and two of her children had graduated the previous year). The writer agreed so as to be as supportive as possible for the remaining team members.

The presentation teams, two Spanish speaking teams and three English speaking teams, met several times prior to each workshop to practice the verbiage and timing of the presentations. The presentation teams met as a whole group prior to each presentation to discuss possible problems the individual teams were experiencing and to provide support. An introductory letter (see Appendix A) was composed, translated, and sent to all first-grade families to make them aware of the upcoming workshops.

The writer visited the first-grade classrooms to distribute the Partners in Print flyers, tell students to remind their parents of the workshops, and provide small incentives, such as stickers, for students who returned paperwork. All families were telephoned the evening before the workshops as a reminder for a parent or parent surrogate to attend the workshop. The individual teams were in charge of phoning the students' families in the classroom where they were presenting. The writer reserved the use of the auditorium for the first-grade parents to meet as a whole group prior to and

immediately after the workshops for housekeeping items, such as introductions, raffles, questions, and evaluations. The actual program was run under the PTA Parent Education Committee, and so the writer attended monthly PTA meetings to keep the PTA informed of the program and at times, to request additional support. The first-grade teachers were given weekly updates when the writer attended grade-level meetings to answer questions or concerns that the teachers or leadership-team members might have.

The literacy sessions that were presented to the first-grade students and their families each took the following format. The sessions were scheduled from 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. to accommodate the busing schedule. The parents and presentation teams met in the school auditorium for a brief introduction to the program being presented on that day. Workshops 2 through 4 included a raffle, using the prior workshop evaluation return as the raffle ticket. Parents and presenters were then released to their classrooms for the presentations, and then parents and presenters met in the auditorium again after the presentations for closing remarks and evaluations.

Once in the classrooms, parents sat with their child and parents were then asked to adopt two or three first-grade friends whose parents were unable to attend for that day. The presenters gave the rationale for the first station, modeled the parent/child activity, and then the parents and children completed the activity for the station following the directions and suggestions given by the presenters and listed on the training posters. This sequence was repeated for each station. At the end of the workshop, parents were given a workshop evaluation sheet (see Appendix B) to fill out, parent workshop handouts for reference, and an activity related to the workshop to complete at home. Children whose parents were unable to attend took home a letter (see Appendix C) expressing regret that the parent was unable to attend, a workshop handout, and an activity related to the

workshop to complete at home. Children who completed and returned the activity to school received a small incentive, such as a pencil. A celebration of partnership was held at the end of the four workshops, complete with certificates, prizes related to literacy, cake, cookies, and juice. An invitation (see Appendix D) to the celebration was written, translated, and distributed, and family members, students, teachers, and the presentation-team members all attended.

The second part of the implementation plan was to improve the first-grade literacy skills of 20 bilingual students identified by their teachers to be at risk of acquiring the literacy skills necessary for them to be successful at reading. This portion of the implementation plan occurred concurrently with the parent-participation implementation phase. The writer asked two fifth-grade teachers who had provided fifth-grade buddies to primary classes in previous years to participate in the program. The teachers were asked to recommend 10 students, preferably bilingual students, who could cross-age tutor the first-grade students in literacy skills. The teachers agreed and each teacher asked five of their more responsible students if they would like to be Reading Buddies for the first graders. Seven of the fifth-grade student tutors spoke Spanish and English, and the other student tutors spoke English only. The first-grade and fifth-grade classroom schedules became a concern because a mutually acceptable time when all students could be released from class without compromising the students' academic programs was difficult to coordinate. The first-grade and fifth-grade teachers and the writer agreed upon using Wednesday afternoons during the early release/teacher planning time for the Reading Buddies program. The compromise necessitated that the selected first-grade students and fifth-grade tutors stay for "Coachie hour", a playground free-time for students whose parents picked them up at the normal release time and for students taking the bus home at

the normal release time. Instead of the selected students attending Coachie hour, they would attend the Reading Buddies cross-age tutoring session in the writer's classroom. The first-grade students selected for the literacy-tutoring program coincidentally all took the bus, and the fifth-grade teachers selected students that were either willing to stay at school or who took the bus and needed to stay at school until the regular release time.

The fifth-grade tutors attended four training sessions with the writer prior to meeting with the first-grade students. The focal points of the training sessions were the following:

1. Working with younger students, modeling and role-playing different scenarios (such as the use of praise, refocusing attention, helping vs. doing, and dealing with silliness and non-compliance) that might occur during the cross-age sessions.

2. Introducing books and looking at the pictures to get meaning from text.

3. Asking and answering questions about stories, and making predictions while reading books.

4. Working with words, such as rhyming words and word patterns, high frequency words, compound words/words within words, initial consonant sounds, and word endings.

5. Learning rhyming songs and simple phonemic awareness activities to use as fillers and refocusing activities with the younger students.

6. Using an interactive journal to record questions, observations, and anything else related to the Reading Buddy literacy sessions.

There were 12 Reading Buddy literacy sessions scheduled, but 2 sessions were canceled due to school-scheduled activities that significantly interfered with the tutoring sessions. The final tutoring session was a celebration, complete with books as gifts,

certificates, cake and juice. The fifth-grade tutors arrived 15 minutes prior to each Reading Buddy literacy session so the writer could review the session's agenda and answer any questions or concerns about previous sessions. Some of the questions or concerns addressed might have been gleaned through the interactive journals, through conversations with the teachers or through the writer's own observations. Once the first graders arrived, two first-grade students met with their fifth grade buddy and the group of three was considered a team. Each Reading Buddy literacy session lasted approximately 50 minutes and included most of the following components:

1. Students ate a small snack.

2. First-grade students chose a familiar text and read it to the tutor.

3. First-grade students chose an unfamiliar text and read it to or with the fifth-grade tutor.

4. Fifth-grade tutors helped the first-grade students work with word identification skills, such as taking sentences apart and putting them back together, or working on finding words within words.

5. First-grade students colored a book to take home and share with their family while fifth-grade tutors wrote in their interactive journals.

6. The writer presented a formal phonemic awareness activity to all of the students.

7. The first-grade and fifth-grade buddies summarized what was accomplished during the reading tutoring time.

The final aspect of the implementation plan to improve first-grade literacy skills focused on providing additional family support in early literacy by establishing a parent education library and designing a web site on literacy. The writer was active in the

school PTA and was the Parent Education Chairperson for a year prior to the practicum. There was a limited amount of money budgeted for parent education, and so the writer needed twice to ask for an increase in funding to cover the costs of the Partners in Print program purchases, the associated costs for implementing the first-grade family education portion of the practicum, and funding for the parent-lending library. The PTA generously increased the funding for parent education six-fold in order to bring the Partners in Print program to reality. Priorities had to be realigned, and the writer decided to delay plans to establish a parent library so that the rest of the parent-education program would not be compromised.

The writer enrolled in a class on web-page design in order to fulfill the plan of designing a literacy web site. The writer asked for input at one of the monthly PTA meetings to assess how to best publicize the upcoming site. The writer was informed that the PTA president had attended a PTA convention the previous week where the president had been encouraged to establish a PTA web site, and that a literacy link was welcome as an addition to that web site once it was up and running. The PTA web site is not yet running as an easily accessible web site for users, and so a literacy link has not yet been added. The writer considered designing a separate literacy web site, but was discouraged from doing so, and so will add the literacy link to the PTA web site when the site becomes more accessible.

Chapter V: Results

Results

The problem to be solved in this practicum was that many first-grade students were not successful at grade-level reading skills. The selected strategy to solve the problem was a multifaceted approach that provided additional support in literacy for all first-grade students in general through a parent-volunteer leadership group conducting parent/child literacy workshops, and establishing a parent education library and a web site on literacy. Another aspect of the solution specifically focused on providing cross-age tutoring in literacy skills for the 20 most at-risk first-grade readers identified by the first-grade teachers. The goal of the practicum was to provide first-grade students with the additional literacy support necessary for success in reading in general, and the reading strategies necessary to pass school, district, and state reading assessments. The expected outcomes and their results follow:

1. Sixty of 100 first-grade students will read at or above their grade level as indicated by district reading benchmarks.

This outcome was met.

A total of 63 of 100 first-grade students passed their district reading grade-level benchmarks at or above their grade level. There were 42 students who passed at grade level, 17 students who passed a half of a grade level above, and 4 students who passed a year above grade level.

2. First-grade children will receive additional literacy support at home, with at least 30 of 100 students demonstrating reading behavior growth, as measured by scores on Fredericks and Rasinski's Attitudinal Scale for Parents (1990), a home reading behavior survey.

This outcome was met.

A total of 36 of 100 parent surveys were returned with all 10 items on the survey marked "strongly agree" or "agree" in reference to parental observations of their child's reading growth.

3. Twenty of 100 first-grade students identified by their teachers as most at risk of reading failure will receive additional literacy support at school in order to increase their literacy skills, as measured by at least 15 of the students receiving a partially proficient score of 117/168 or higher on the district literacy screen/phonics assessment.

This outcome was not met.

Two students moved out of the area, and of the remaining 18 students, 13 students received a partially proficient score of 117/168 or higher on the district literacy screen/phonics assessment.

Discussion

Overall, the practicum outcomes indicated that the practicum was a success, even though the third outcome fell short of being met. The practicum focused on improving the literacy skills of all first-grade students, with a special emphasis on assisting those students identified by their teachers as most at risk of reading failure. Danielson (1997) stated that a presentation of modeling, presentation, and feedback of literacy information with parents and children was valuable in teaching parents to help their children. This practicum program utilized such an approach where parent volunteers were taught to present workshops on literacy to parents and their first-grade children. The workshops focused on modeling for parents how to assist their children at home with the specific literacy skills of drawing meaning from text, the reading/writing connection, reading favorite books, and building self-esteem. The workshops were held during the day in an

effort to attract as many of the parents as possible. Bus transportation was provided, although only a couple families took advantage of the transportation. Most parents walked or came by car, and some parents decided to carpool after the first workshop.

Teachers, parents, students, and volunteer trainers were very positive in their comments about the program. Over half of the home-reading behavior surveys were returned, 63 of 100, which in itself indicates strong parental support. Some comments on the surveys were "I always thought that looking at the pictures was cheating, but now I know it helps him read"; "I thought I knew a lot about reading, but I learned a lot more"; "I thought reading was sounding out words, I thought that was THE way to read, but now I will use prediction and pictures more"; and "The most important thing I learned is that I AM my child's first and lifelong teacher". The parent responses were consistent with Epstein (1987) and Edwards (1995) findings that parents wanted to help their children succeed in reading, but did not fully understand how.

The parent-volunteer leadership team wrote, translated, and distributed an additional program evaluation form (see Appendix E) that was sent home to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The form had a return rate of 35 out of 100. When asked "How would you rate the Partners in Print program in helping you work with your child with literacy skills at home?" 20 parents responded "helpful" and 15 responded "very helpful". Parents said that the parts of the program which were most helpful were: "all of the workshops" (number one answer); "prediction"; "family reading"; "interacting with the children"; "hands on experiences with the children"; "the variety of ideas offered"; and "making a tape of reading". When parents were asked, "What can we do to improve the Partners in Print program?" many answered positively

with responses of "nothing, it's good just how it is" or "add more workshops". Several parents responded that they needed additional book-reading materials at home.

Other answers on the survey referenced changing the time of the workshops to earlier in the day or offering the workshops in the evenings so that parents who work could more easily attend the sessions. These issues were discussed with the volunteer-leadership team prior to choosing a time, but the team decided to choose a time when district buses were be able to transport the parents whose children took the bus to school in the hopes that the workshops would have better attendance. Another reason the leadership team decided to offer the workshops during the school day was so that all children would be able to benefit from the workshops, whether or not a family member could attend. This ideology supported Epstein's (1991) findings that all parents must be given the opportunity to be involved in their children's education in order for all students to succeed. The team members felt that if all children attended the workshops and took the parent packets home, the children might be able to explain to their parents some of what occurred during the actual workshop. These parents and children would then indirectly benefit from the workshop information and perhaps the parents would be motivated to come to subsequent workshops.

The reading-behavior growth survey and program survey responses indicated that some of the parents who never attended a workshop indeed thought the parent packets were helpful and learned literacy techniques to use with their children at home. Snow et al. (1998) reported that how parents interact with their children at home is one powerful predictor of future literacy success. The survey comments certainly indicated that parents were interacting positively with their children when approaching literacy tasks as a result of the workshops and workshop handouts.

Teachers evaluated and provided input on the parent-training component of the intervention on the Teacher Evaluation Form (see Appendix F). Sonic of the teacher's comments to question one, "What did you like most about the Partners in Print program and why?" included: "good parent/student involvement at school and home"; "hands-on activities for students that were fun and a good learning experience"; "parents gained knowledge of how children constructed an understanding of print"; "the handouts with follow-up activities for parents were useful so that parents could remember what to do at home"; "the handouts and regret you missed the workshop letters for parents kept all parents involved"; and "the program was a great way to have parents help our students learn". The teachers' surveys supported the research of Linek, Rasinski, and Harkins (1997) who stated that teachers believe that parent involvement is very important and beneficial, especially in the areas of motivating and modeling, for literacy success in students.

In response to the question of how could the program be improved, teachers made suggestions to improve parent involvement, including repeating the program in the evening, making videos that could be sent home with students, and recruiting volunteer parents to go into other parents' homes. The general comments section included comments such as the program was well paced and sequenced: the trainers were great; children loved having their families attend; and general acknowledgements of thank-you and looking forward to the next set of workshops.

The third outcome, which was not met, focused on providing additional literacy assistance to students at risk of being unsuccessful in literacy skills through the use of peer tutoring. In past years, the writer collaborated with the fifth-grade teachers to provide peer tutoring to the writer's primary-age students. The tutoring took place once a

week during the school day, and the results were positive for both the younger and older students, which is the model the writer intended to utilize for the practicum.

The district and state standards had become more challenging at the time of the implementation of this practicum. The first-grade and fifth-grade teachers had difficulty agreeing on a mutually acceptable time during the school day or week for the cross-age tutoring program as a result of the increased demand of academic standards and time-on-task issues. The teachers' planning time on Wednesday afternoons was chosen because it seemed like a perfect solution to the adults. A couple of weeks into implementation, however, the students expressed that while they wanted to be involved in the cross-age tutoring program, they missed the Coachie hour that other students participated in during that time. The writer spoke with the teachers and students and reached a compromise. The writer offered the students a snack prior to the tutoring sessions, which increased the motivation of most students. Two fifth-grade tutors dropped out of the program and were replaced, and two of the first-grade students moved and changed attendance to another school during the implementation period.

While the intent was that all at-risk first-grade second-language students chosen for the tutoring program would have a reading buddy that spoke their primary language, not all of the fifth-grade reading buddies were bilingual, so not all first-grade students received primary language support during the project. Several students were absent intermittently due to scheduled appointments (i.e. doctor, dentist) or due to a general absence for the day. The students worked well with each other when they did attend.

The fifth-grade tutors' reflective journals revealed that all fifth-grade tutors enjoyed the interaction with the first-grade students. Several positive comments were written about the first graders, including that the younger students were "really smart",

"tried hard", and were "funny". The fifth graders wrote that they enjoyed "having the first graders read with me", "making books for the first graders", and "putting sentences together to help the first graders read". The first-grade students' reflections of the tutoring sessions were obtained indirectly from their teachers because the younger students would only tell the writer "it was fun" or "I like it" when asked about the program. The first-grade teachers related that the students were excited to come to the sessions, the students smiled and seemed happy when they returned to their classes and talked about the sessions, the students were very proud to have fifth-grade buddies reading with them, and the students seemed confident when sharing what they were learning during the sessions. The students' comments about the program are consistent with other research on cross-age tutoring and the positive-affective benefits of such programs (Collier, 1995; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994). The comments also support the findings of Snow et al. (1998) that children were more motivated to overcome the literacy difficulties they were encountering if they were motivated and found reading as an enjoyable activity.

A constructive criticism some fifth-grade tutors noted in their reflective journals was that it was difficult to keep both of their first-grade buddies on task at the same time during the tutoring sessions. In retrospect, perhaps each fifth grader should have had only one first-grade buddy, given the amount of formal tutoring training provided to the fifth graders and the level of functioning of the first graders.

The writer noted in her reflective journal that the fifth-grade tutors used positive reinforcement and motivation techniques that were very effective in keeping the first-grade students engaged during the tutoring sessions. The difficulties the writer observed were in the actual delivery of tutoring lessons in that the fifth-grade tutors often had trouble determining the difference between giving the answers and doing the activities for

the first-grade students versus helping the first graders with the activities. It seemed that the tutors wanted the first graders to have total success and it was difficult for the tutors to accept work that was not completely correct. The writer thought the reflections in the fifth-grade journals were probably related to frustration because the first-grade students were not able to complete all tasks perfectly. Vadasy, Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, and O'Conner (1997) reported similar discrepancies in delivery of instruction when utilizing community volunteers for literacy tutoring with first graders. The writer's journal reflected that the first-grade students did not seem to mind the extra assistance, and the writer viewed the fifth-grade tutors as using scaffolding techniques that were helpful to the first graders. Knapp and Winsor (1998) reported that using scaffolding techniques were successful as a reading-tutoring strategy for primary-aged delayed readers, and Boyle and Peregoy (1998) reported the techniques as being successful with first- and second-language readers.

The evaluation tool utilized in measuring the success of outcome number three was the district literacy screen/phonics assessment, which is heavily based in deep letter knowledge, phonemic awareness activities, and site-word vocabulary. This assessment was chosen because there was a substantial amount of literature linking these skills as being closely related to success in learning to read (Adams, 1990; Chard & Dickson, 1999; Chard et al., 1998; Stanovich, 1986). Yopp and Yopp (2000) suggested general guidelines in presenting phonemic awareness activities to young children, including making sure that phonemic awareness activities are a part of a rich literacy instructional experience that takes into account language development. The guidelines discussed suggested moving from larger units of sound, such as word rhymes and syllables, to smaller units of sound, such as onsets and rhymes and phonemes. The structure of the

district assessment took into account these basic principles. It is important to note, however, that little research has been conducted with young, second-language students who are learning to read English.

Peregoy and Boyle (2000) suggested that the English-language proficiency of second-language learners should be considered prior to the decision of how and when to use phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. The decisions made should also take into consideration whether the second-language learners even hear or manipulate the speech sounds being tested in English (Sutton, 1998). The tutoring sessions for the practicum focused mainly on the reading experience in the context of book reading, songs and rhymes, and other phonemic awareness activities and site words were incorporated within the context of the book reading. The writer did not, however, assess to determine if the second-language students in the tutoring group were able to distinguish orally or verbally the sounds they were being exposed to in the phonemic awareness and phonics activities. In light of that information, caution should be taken when interpreting the results of this portion of the practicum, or any study that assesses young second-language learners, especially when utilizing instruments that focus on unfamiliar sounds to their native language.

Although additional family support in early literacy was not provided through the establishment of a parent education library or a web site on literacy, overall, the writer was very pleased with the results of the practicum. The post-practicum surveys highlighted the impact the project had on the first-grade students, not only in terms of increased student achievement, but also in terms of unexpected outcomes. Teachers' comments reflected positive attitudes about parents being partners in their children's literacy education, parents were supportive of the program and some signed up to be

members of the leadership team for future workshops, and parents and teachers alike commented that they were looking forward to future workshops. In fact, the leadership team started planning a second set of workshops immediately following the celebration of the first. The students participating in the cross-age tutoring sessions displayed positive attitudes towards reading, their buddies, and themselves. The success of the practicum was a truly a result of the positive and supportive attitudes of all involved.

Recommendations

Upon completion of this practicum, the writer generated seven recommendations. The first five recommendations pertained to the parent-participation portion of the practicum, and the last two recommendations pertained to the cross-age tutoring portion of the practicum. The seven recommendations were as follows:

1. Regularly schedule parent/child workshops throughout the school year for the families of early-literacy learners because families and teachers alike expressed an interest in a continued parent/child/teacher partnership in education.

2. Continue to recruit and train parent volunteers to present the literacy workshops because the parents who were the presenters took their leadership role in the program seriously and felt some of the strength and success of the program was due to the parent-to-parent interactions that took place during the workshops.

3. Explore different times to offer the workshops to see if more parent/family participation can be encouraged.

4. Consider utilizing technology to further expand the parent-participation portion of the program. Suggestions to incorporate in the future are making video tapes of the presentations to place in a lending library for those parents who cannot attend, and

establishing a literacy web link on a school web page, a PTA web page, or both. Widely advertise both the lending library and the web page in order to reach as many parents as possible with information on beginning literacy skills.

5. Provide for a parent/child lending library to accompany the workshop portion of the program so that enthused parents may borrow books and practice the literacy teachings at home.

6. Consult first-grade and fifth-grade teachers to establish a time for the cross-age tutoring portion of the program, and consult the students involved in the program to confirm that the time and program is attractive to them as well. Maintain the tutor to tutee ratio as one-to-one so that the program is more easily managed and implemented.

7. Evaluate first-grade second-language students to establish which English phonemes they are able to distinguish orally and verbally prior to introducing phonemic awareness and phonics activities in the tutorial setting.

Dissemination

The writer plans to disseminate the ideas and findings of the practicum on a local level through school and district meetings and communications, and on a broader level through professional organizations and publications. The writer plans to submit proposals for the regional, state, and national International Reading Association conferences and the Association for the Education of Young Children conferences. The writer would also like to submit articles to the publications of these associations to disseminate the information on a broader basis. Lastly, the writer is already disseminating some of the information informally through professional networking opportunities and through classes taught at the college level.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT LETTERS (ENGLISH AND SPANISH) INTRODUCING THE PROGRAM

Parent Letter (English) Introducing the Partners in Print Program

PARTNERS IN PRINT

PARENTS, TEACHERS, CHILDREN—A THREE WAY PARTNERSHIP THAT HELPS CHILDREN LEARN AND DEVELOP TO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Dear First-Grade Families:

We recognize and highly value the vital role that parents play in children's literacy development. To encourage and maintain this role, we will begin our "Partners in Print" program for all our first graders and their parents on (insert date here). This is a parent-involvement program specifically designed to encourage the purposeful involvement of parents in children's literacy development.

Through Partners in Print, parents learn about print concepts, choosing books for children, writing "books" at home, specific comprehension strategies, and many more ideas of how to greatly enhance the literacy process at home.

Parents come to their children's classroom for weekly workshop for four weeks. These workshops will take place at our school on (insert dates here). It is very important that all first-grade parents participate with their children in this exciting and valuable program. The sessions will begin promptly at 10:30 a.m. in the school auditorium.

Partners in Print is more successful when parents come to read with their children, but if you have to work and cannot attend, please try to send another adult in your family, a friend, or an older sibling. We would love to see every child reading with someone close to him or her. We look forward to seeing you on (insert date).

Sincerely,

(insert Principal's name)
and
The Partners in Print Presentation Team

Note: We will provide bus transportation to and from the following schools: (insert names of schools). Parents will ride on the Kindergarten Bus that brings the students for the afternoon classes, and will return on the bus that takes the morning classes home.

The bus will leave: (school name) at 9:51 a.m.; (school name) at 9:59 a.m.; (school name) at 10:05 a.m.; (school name) at 10:10 a.m.; and (school name) at 10:15 a.m. The bus will arrive at our school at 10:30 a.m.
The bus will leave our school at 11:45 a.m. and will arrive at: (school name) at 12:00 p.m.; (school name) at 12:06 p.m.; (school name) at 12:12 p.m.; and (school name) at 12:20 p.m.

Parent Letter (Spanish) Introducing the Partners in Print Program

PARTNERS IN PRINT (Socios en la Lectura)
PADRES, MAESTROS, NINOS—ASOCIACION VITAL PARA AYUDAR A LOS NONOS A APRENDER Y DESARROLLAR SU POTENCIAL MAXIMO

Estimados padres de los alumnus de primer grado:

Reconocemos y valoramos altamente el papel importante que los padres cumplen en el desarrollo de la alfabetizacion de sus hijos. Para alentar y mantener este papel, (insert date here), empezaremos con el "Programa Partners in Print" (Socios en la Lecura) para los alumnus de primer grado y sus padres. Este es un programa especificamente disenado para animar la participacion de los padres en el desarrollo de la alfabetizacion de los ninos.

Por medio de Socios en la Lectura, los padres aprenden sobre los conceptos del texto impreso, como elegir libros para los ninos, como escribir "libros" en casa, estrategias especificas para la comprension, y muchas ideas mas de como aumentar el proceso de alfabetizacion en el hogar.

Los padres vendran a las aulas de sus hijos para las sesiones una vez por semana, durante cuatro semanas. Wstos talleres se llefaran a cabo en la escuela (insert dates here). Les solicitamos a todos los padres de primer grado que participen con empezaran sus ninos en este nuevo programa tan importante y valioso. Las sesiones empezaran a las 10:30 de la manana en el auditorio.

Socios en la Lectura es much mas efectivo cuando los padres participan juntamente con sus hijos, pero si ustedes trabajan y no pueden venir, sirvanse enviar a algun otro adulto (familiar, vecino, amigo), o hijo/a mayor. Deseamos que totdo los ninos tengan a alguien importante con quien leer. Espero verlos (insert date here).

Atentamente:

Directora y
Equipo de "Scios en la lectura"

Nota: Proveeremos transporte de autobus de ida y vuelta desde las siguientes escuelas: (insert names of schools). Los padres llegaran en el autobus que trae a la escuela a los nonos de Kindergarten del turno tarde, y regresaran en el autobus que lleva a los nonos de Kindergarten del turno manana a casa.
Autobus saladra: (school name) a las 9:51 a.m.; (school name) a las 9:59 a.m.; (school name) a las 10:05 a.m.; (school name) a las 10:10 a.m.; (school name) a las 10:15 a.m.
Autobus llegara en la escuela a las 10:30 a.m.
Autobus saladra en la escuela a las 11:45 a.m. y llegara a: (school name) a las 12:00 p.m.; (school name) a las 12:06 p.m.; (school name) a las 12:12 p.m.; y (school name) a las 12:20 p.m.

APPENDIX B

PARENT EVALUATION FORM

FOR INDIVIDUAL WORKSHOPS

Parent Evaluation Form for Individual Workshops

PARTNERS IN PRINT
WORKSHOP EVALUATION

WORKSHOP # ___
Parent Name_____ Date _____

Activity Actividad	Very Helpful Muy util	Helpful Util	I didn't like it No me gusto
(Name of 1st station)	☐	☐	☐
Activity Actividad	Very Helpful Muy util	Helpful Util	I didn't like it No me gusto
(Name of 2nd station)	☐	☐	☐
Activity Actividad	Very Helpful Muy util	Helpful Util	I didn't like it No me gusto
(Name of 3rd station)	☐	☐	☐
Activity Actividad	Very Helpful Muy util	Helpful Util	I didn't like it No me gusto
(Name of 4th station)	☐	☐	☐

APPENDIX C

PARENT REGRET LETTER (ENGLISH AND SPANISH)

Parent Regret Letter (English)

Dear Parents:

We are very sorry you were not able to attend our Partners in Print workshop today, (insert date). We hope to see you (insert date of next workshop), at 10:30 a.m. in the school auditorium.

Attached you will find the activities that were taught today. The teachers are going to ask the parents to practice them at home with their children during daily home-reading assignments.

Sincerely,

The Partners in Print Presentation Team

Parent Regret Letter (Spanish)

Estimados padres:

Lamentamos que les haya sido imposible asistir hoy, (insert date), a taller de "Partners in Print" (Socios en la Lectura). Esperamos verlos el proximo (insert date of next workshop), a las 10:30 de la manana, en el auditorio.

Encontrara adjuntas las actividades que se ensenaron en el taller. Los maestros les solicitaran a los padres que las practiquen en casa con sus hijos, durante la lectura hogarena que se asigna diariamente.

Atentamente:

Equipo de "Socios en la lectura"

APPENDIX D

PARENT CELEBRATION INVITATION LETTER (ENGLISH AND SPANISH)

Parent Celebration Letter (English)

YOU ARE INVITED:

Partners in Print Celebration

(insert date of celebration here)

Come and celebrate the completion of the first set of Partners in Print workshops. There will be certificates, prizes, and refreshments at the celebration of our partnership in literacy.

Please plan to join the first-grade students, teachers, and Partners in Print Presentation Team…..

SEE YOU THERE!!!!!!

WHERE: (name of school) Auditorium

WHEN: (date of celebration)

TIME: 10:30 a.m.

Parent Celebration Letter (Spanish)

A LA CELEBRACION DE "PARTNERS IN PRINT"

Socios en la lectura

(insert date of celebration here)

Ven y celebra la culminacion del primer set de talleres de Socios en la lectura. Entregaremos certificados, premios y tambien tendremos, bocadillos, en la celebracion de nuestra sociedad para la lectura y la escritura.

Por favor planea para celebrar con los estudiantes de Primer grado, maestros y el equipo de Socios en la lectura.

NOS VEREMOS AQUI!!!!!

DONDE: Auditorio (name of school)

CUANDO: (date of celebration)

HORA: 10:30 de la manana

APPENDIX E

END OF PROGRAM PARENT EVALUATION FORM (ENGLISH AND SPANISH)

End of Program Parent Evaluation Form (English)

PARTNERS IN PRINT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Child's Name_____ Room # _____

1. How many Partners in Print workshops did your family attend?

0 1 2 3 4

2. How would you rate the Partners in Print program in helping you work with your child with literacy skills at home?

☐ Very helpful ☐ Helpful ☐Not helpful

3. Which part(s) of Partners in Print did you find most helpful?

_____

_____

4. What was the main thing you learned from Partners in Print?

_____

_____

5. Which activities from the parent packets were most successful at home?

_____

_____

6. Which activities from the parent packets were most difficult to complete at home?

_____

_____

7. What can we do to improve the Partners in Print program?

_____

_____

_____

8. Other comments:_____

_____

_____

_____

End of Program Parent Evaluation Form (Spanish)

PARTNERS IN PRINT PROGRAM EVALUACION DEL PROGRAMA

Nombre del nino_____ Salon # _____

1. A cuantos talleres de socios en la lectura asistio tu familia?

0 1 2 3 4

2. Que calificacion le darias a socios en la lectura en cuanto a la ayuda que a sido para tu nino en casa?

☐ Me yudo mucho ☐ me ayudo ☐ No me ayudo

3. Que partes del programa encontraste que fueron de mayor ayuda?

_____

_____

4. Que fue lo mas importante que aprendiste en este taller?

_____

_____

5. Cuales actividades del paquete para los padres fueron de mayor exito en tu hogar?

_____

_____

6. Cuales actividades fueron mas dificiles de completar en casa?

_____

_____

7. Que piensas que podemos hacer para mejorar este programa?

_____

_____

_____

8. Tienes mas comentarios?:

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX F

END OF PROGRAM TEACHER EVALUATION FORM

End of Program Teacher Evaluation Form

Dear First-Grade Teachers:

Thank you for participating in the first set of workshops for Partners in Print. The PIP Leadership Team appreciates the tremendous support you have given to the program and would like you to complete a brief evaluation of the program. We will incorporate your ideas and suggestions whenever possible when planning for the next set of parent workshops. Thank you, in advance, for your time.

Sincerely,

The Partners in Print Leadership Team

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN ASAP
(Attach another paper if necessary)

1. What did you like most about the Partners in Print program and why?

2. What part of the PIP program needs improvement and how do you suggest implementing the improvement? Please be specific and include suggestions that would benefit the program.

3. General comments: